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## Body lice

Infestation with body lice (*Pediculus humanus*) is uncommon. They tend to infest people in extreme states of poverty or personal neglect. Particularly when clothing is not changed or regular washing is not undertaken.

The eggs of body lice are laid and glued to cloth fibres instead of hair, and the lice feed off the skin. Regular hot washing of clothes and bathing has led to a decrease in incidence of body lice but during wartime and in some undeveloped countries the condition can still occur.

Body lice in the past have been responsible for spreading diseases such as typhus. However because of the decline in numbers of people infested with body lice this is no longer a significant problem.

Similar insecticides used in the treatment of head lice are used in the treatment of body lice. Hot washing of clothes and bathing should be emphasised.

### Important points on treatment for body lice

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- Hot washing and tumble-drying is effective in killing lice and eggs.
- Dry cleaning is also effective.
- Shampooing the hairy parts of the body with an insecticide may be needed.
- All household contacts should be treated.

### Related Information

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#### On DermNet NZ:

- [Head lice](#)
- [Pubic lice](#)

#### Other websites:

- [Lice](#) - emedicine dermatology, the online textbook

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DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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